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DAILY DOZEN FOR MEN

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION
PONDICHERRY, INDIA

Mother's Daily Walk after Tennis (1952)

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All education of the body should begin at the very birth and continue throughout life : it is never too soon to begin nor too late to continue.

The education of the body has three principal aspects : (1) control and discipline of functions, (2) a total, methodical and harmonious development of all the parts and movements of the body and (3) rectification of defects and deformities, if there are any.

*

Physical culture which aims at building a body capable of serving as a fit instrument for the higher consciousness demands very austere habits : a great regularity in sleep, food, physical exercises and in all activities.

*

We must, by means of a rational and clear-seeing physical education, make our body strong and supple so that it may become in the material world a fit instrument for the truth-force which wills to manifest through us.

The Mother

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The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside ; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. *Śarīram khalu dharmasādhanam*, says the old Sanskrit adage,—the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action.

Sri Aurobindo

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PREFACE

It has been universally accepted by health counsellors and health seekers that Physical Exercise, like food, sleep, etc., is one of the most essential things in a man's daily life. Children, boys and girls, men and women – in fact everybody must do some kind of Physical Exercise if they want to live in health and happiness.

It is understood that the exercise programme will vary from person to person. A man doing hard physical labour, requires to do some quiet and relaxing exercises like stretching, Asanas and deep breathing. Teachers, students, office workers and those who lead a sedentary life, must do exercises that make them pant and perspire profusely. Growing children must be given an exercise programme that will help them to grow up in a harmonious manner.

There are various forms of physical exercises. If they are practised regularly, in a progressive manner, with proper food, sleep and rest, personal and environmental hygienic habits, a satisfying work and occupation, and a tranquil mind, without uselessly dissipating energy, one will grow in health and vitality abundantly.

In this booklet, 'Daily Dozen for Men', I propose to give a set of twelve exercises, covering the whole body. It is meant for the common man, who is busy the whole day and has very little time to spare. This programme will take about twenty to thirty minutes ; it needs very little place, can be done anywhere, and does not need any equipment.

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Before starting this programme it is advisable to consult a doctor to check that one does not have any serious physical or health problem, that prevents one from taking up physical exercise. One should then start slowly, doing only a few repetitions in each exercise to begin with. Then gradually one should increase the number of repetitions, until one finds that the muscles of the whole body have been worked out sufficiently. It is said that about fifteen repetitions of each exercise will be required to induce sufficient blood circulation in each area of the body. In this exercise plan, the minimum and maximum numbers of repetitions for each exercise have been given. But this is only a guide, and one need not strictly limit oneself by these repetitions. For a man with normal health and body, the maximum number given in the text will be sufficient. A weaker man should keep to the lower repetitions. A heavy man with plenty of adiposity on his body will be required to increase the number to twenty, twenty-five or thirty repetitions to burn up his excess fat. One must be led by one's feeling. At the end of the exercise, one must be pleasantly tired but not exhausted.

Fix a time when you are not in a hurry, nor tired or hungry, not immediately after or before a heavy meal, and do your exercise at that time regularly. You may omit exercise once a week, say on Sundays. Be suitably clad so that you can do the movements without hindrance. Select a quiet place with good ventilation for your exercise and breathe deeply as indicated in the exercise schedule. It is preferable to bathe after your exercise for a clean and fresh feeling. You can also rest for a few minutes after your exercise, before bathing.

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While bathing rub your body thoroughly and afterwards dry yourself with a clean, rough towel.

Finally, at the end of this booklet, twelve important health habits have been given to guide the readers on the way to health and physical well-being.

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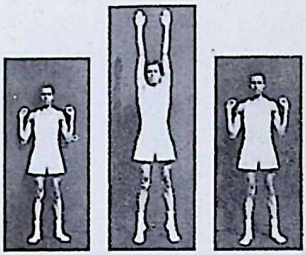
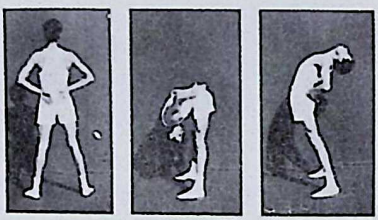
DAILY DOZEN FOR MEN



1. The Stretch—(Min. 5—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Stand erect, feet apart, hands on shoulders (pull elbows down).

1. Hands upward, rise on toes (stretch)—breathe in.
2. Hands on shoulders, heels normal (pull elbows down)—breathe out.



2. Trunk Bending Down & Back—(Min. 5—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Stand with feet apart, back of hands on the small of the back.

1. Trunk bending down (knees straight)—breathe out.
2. Trunk bending back (head back) — breathe in.

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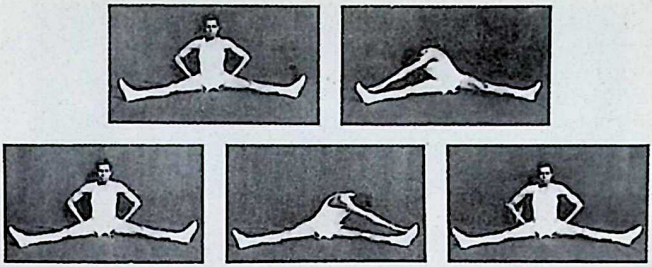
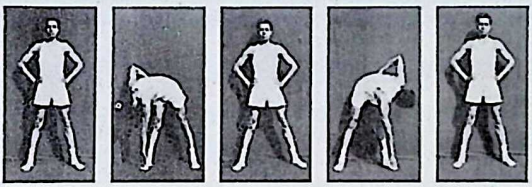


3. (a) Twist Seated—(Min. 10—Max. 15)*

Starting Position — Sit on floor, hands on waist, feet wide apart (chest held high).

1. Turn trunk to the right, left hand touching right toes (do not move feet)—breathe out.
2. Trunk normal, left hand on waist (keep chest up)—breathe in.
3. Turn trunk to the left, right hand touching left toes (do not move feet)—breathe out.
4. Trunk normal, right hand on waist (hold chest high)—breathe in.



3. (b) Twist Standing—(Min. 10—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Stand with feet apart, hands on waist.

1, 2, 3, 4 — Same movements as 3(a).

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* Those who have stiff joints and find difficulty in doing 3 (a) may try to do 3 (b) as an alternative.

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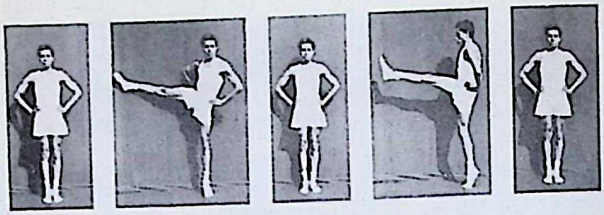
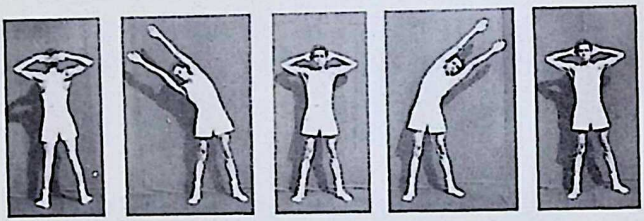


4. Kicks—(Min. 10—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Stand erect, hands on waist.

1. Right foot raised sideward (kick foot as high as possible) — breathe in.
2. Right foot normal — breathe out.
3. Right foot raised forward (kick foot as high as possible) — breathe in.
4. Right foot normal—breathe out.

5-8. Repeat with the left leg.



5. Trunk Bending Sideways—(Min. 10—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Stand erect, feet apart, hands on neck (elbows back).

1. Bend trunk to the right, hands upward (stretch) — breathe out.
2. Trunk normal, hands on neck (elbows back) — breathe in.
3. Bend trunk to the left, hands upward (stretch) — breathe out.
4. Trunk normal, hands on neck (elbows back) — breathe in,

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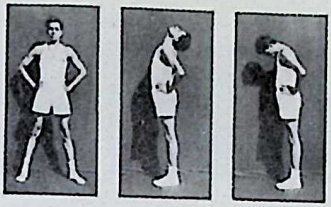
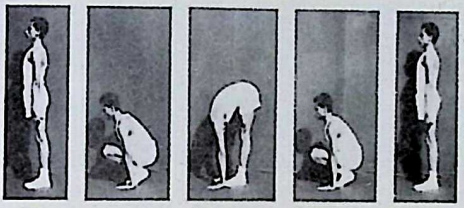


6. Neck Pressing Backward—(Min. 10—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Stand erect, hands on waist.

1. Head press back (try to see the back of the head, do not bend trunk back) — breathe in.
2. Head press down (press chin on chest, do not bend trunk down) — breathe out.



7. Squats—(Min. 10—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Stand erect.

1. Squat on floor (heels raised, knees together, hands on floor near feet) — breathe in.
2. Knees normal (keep hands on floor)—breathe out.
3. Squat on floor (same as count one) — breathe in.
4. Stand erect — breathe out.

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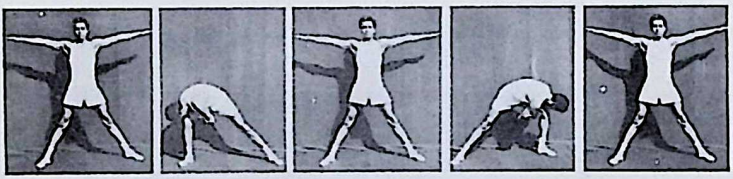
8. Leg Raising—(Min. 10—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Lying down, back on the floor.

1. Raise legs at right angle to the body (knees straight, feet together, small of the back pressed to the ground) — breathe in.
2. Lower legs on floor (small of the back pressed to the ground) — breathe out.



9. The Compressor—(Min. 10—Max. 15, each side)

Starting Position — Stand erect, feet apart, arms raised sideward.

1. Bend trunk forward (right knee bent slightly, arms wrapped around right knee, chest on right knee) — breathe out.
2. Trunk normal, arms sideward (buttock muscles tight) — breathe in.

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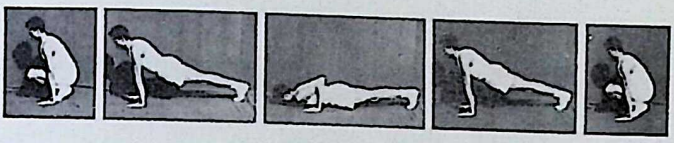
3. Bend trunk forward (left knee bent slightly, arms wrapped around left knee, chest on left knee) — breathe out.

4. Trunk normal, arms sideward (buttock muscles tight) — breathe in.



10. Dips—(Min. 5—Max. 15)

Starting Position — Squat on floor (heels raised, knees bent and together, hands on ground near feet shoulder-width apart).

1. Feet backward (body supported on hands and feet, elbows straight, trunk and legs straight and in line, feet together) — breathe in.

2. Elbows bent (body supported on hands and feet with elbows bent, so trunk and legs come close to the floor) — breathe out.

3. Elbows straight (same as count one) — breathe in.

4. Squat on floor (same as starting position) — breathe out.

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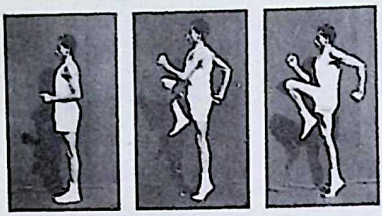
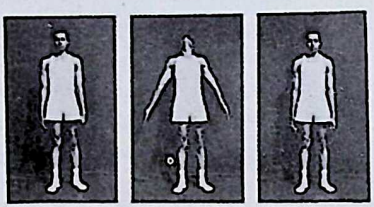


11. Running on Spot —(Min. 25—Max. 100, for each foot)

Starting Position — Stand erect, arms bent, fists half-clenched.

1. Run on spot, raising knees high (raise arms and knees vigorously and lower feet lightly; done properly, there should be no jar)—breathe normally all the time.



12. Deep Breathing—(Min. 5—Max. 10)

Starting Position — Stand erect.

1. Rotate arms outward and inhale (look up and hold the position).
2. Arms normal and exhale (do not droop).

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DAILY DOZEN HEALTH HABITS

1. Execute the Daily Dozen every day.
2. Play some adult athletic games three times a week.
3. Spend one afternoon in the open each week.
4. Walk a brisk mile or two daily.
5. Breathe deeply several times a day.
6. Sleep for eight hours with windows open.
7. Eat some fruits and coarse vegetables every day.
8. Chew all food well before swallowing it.
9. Drink eight glasses of water a day.
10. Move your bowels once or twice a day.
11. Daily take a bath vigorously rubbing your body.
12. Keep a little time each day for quiet contemplation on your highest thoughts and celebrate your birthday by having a health check-up.

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Build in yourself the total harmony, so that when the time comes Perfect Beauty can express itself through your body.

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...The basic programme will be to build a body, beautiful in form, harmonious in posture, supple and agile in its movements, powerful in its activities and resistant in its health and organic function.

The Mother

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